

# Faculty of Engineering, University of Porto



## A Research Project

### Cambodian Youth and Political Engagement via Social Media

By

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**“This Dissertation is submitted in part of requirement for the Degree of M.A.”**

M.A. in Multimedia

Specialist in Culture and Arts

Supervisor: Helena Lima

27<sup>th</sup> July 2014



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Research Project Approval

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Recommended for Acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

M.A. of Culture and Arts

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By

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## **1. Abstract**

Social media in the new technology age enables individual to be a citizen journalist. The number of worldwide Social Network Sites (SNSs) users –including the developing country in Southeast Asia like Cambodia– is increasing significantly. What makes Facebook so attractive and effective is that a large number of people are able to share information, knowledge, opinions, ideas and experiences through this new platform with their family, friends and colleagues over the interesting topics in seconds globally. For political communication process, social media is a new mean for predication and democracy, which bring voice from the public to the government directly. Social media consists of internet forums, blog, wikis, podcast, Google Groups, online news, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and Twitter, podcast, webcast, and even the short messaging system (SMS). Political decision-makers and citizens could air their message to discuss and debate with each other through those means interactively with faster, cheaper potencies that could make a global reach. It is obvious that new media helps to eliminate barriers to free flow of information in this new technology age among users worldwide and Cambodia is no exception to this trend.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends and professors who always give me encouragement, supports, and motivation.

## Acknowledgement

I must give remarkable thanks to a number of people, without whom this dissertation might not have been completed, and to whom I am truly grateful.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my school division for approving my thesis topic and allowing me to conduct this research study with great support. I would also like to express my profound thanks to my supervisor Dr. Helena Laura Dias de Lima who has spent her priceless time to guide, read and assist me throughout the process of my research.

I am grateful to my family; especially, my beloved parents, Ong Ung and Yi Sor, who always encourage and stay by my side mentally from Cambodia. My brother, BunY Ung, who has never left me in any difficulties and always taught me that things are hard but can be accomplished by never giving up and keeping doing my best. My sister, Meng Yean Ung, who always gives me alert, “You will make it.”

I wish to thank Mr. Sopheaktra Kim, who always reminds me to accomplish my thesis over half a year. He has been a source of encouragement and inspiration; and a special thanks to him for guiding and teaching me some computer skills throughout the entire process. He is very special motivator.

I am also indebted to some friends including Rui Almeida, Socheath Heng, Rosa Hout, Sovannaroith Ouk and S. Nara Chên, who have supported and been there for me every time I feel down. They always cheer me up and refresh my feeling of courage to fulfill my writing. Moreover, I would like to give my sincere thanks to another friend of mine, Marie Ros, who spent out of her very busy time to help proofreading. I also wish to acknowledge and to thank those 26 participants who volunteered to be my interviewees. They have spent their countless and precious time to contribute to this thesis.

Finally, I must thank my colleagues and librarians staff of University of Porto who assisted and provided the documents relevant to my research and writing process. A special thanks to the members of staff of the department of Multi-Media for their updated news and supports.

*Kim Oan UNG*

## Table of Contents:

	Page
1. Abstract .....	1
Dedication .....	2
Acknowledgement.....	3
Abbreviation.....	6
2. Introduction .....	7
2.1 Mobile Technology Enhances Youth Political Participation.....	8
2.2 Social Media, Social Network and Mobile Internet.....	9
2.3 New Media's Popularity and Increased Internet Access .....	10
3. Research Question and Hypothesis .....	11
4. Bibliographic Review .....	12
4.1 Motivation Associated With the Use of Facebook .....	12
4.2 Youth and Political Participation .....	13
4.3 Traditional Media vs New Media .....	15
4.3.1 Cambodian Press and Situation .....	16
4.3.2 Transformation Nowadays with Technology.....	18
4.4 Social Media Networking and Political Engagement .....	19
4.4.1 Facebook and Youth Political Participation .....	21
4.4.2 Political Actors Use Online Campaign to Nominate Voter .....	23
4.5 Facebook has impact on Cambodian Politics.....	27
5. Research Methodology .....	28
5.1. Sample .....	28
5.2 Procedures .....	28
6. Findings and Discussion.....	29
6.1 Facebook User and Their Motivation.....	29

6.2 Facebook Enables Youth to Use For Free Expression .....	30
6.2.1 Facebook Use for Informational Motivation .....	32
6.3 Youth and Their Facebook Use in Political Context.....	34
6.3.1 External Factor Use via Facebook for Political Participation.....	35
6.3.2 Internal Factor Use via Facebook for Political Participation.....	36
6.4 Facebook’s Growing Influence on Cambodian Politics.....	38
6.4.1 Mindset Change Leads Change to Political Result.....	39
6.4.2 Opposition Party Use Facebook to Attract Voters.....	40
6.4.3 Voter Choice & Election Result Effect via Facebook Campaign.....	42
7. Conclusion.....	45
References .....	49
APPENDICES .....	54
Appendix A .....	54
Appendix B.....	56
Appendix C.....	57



## **Abbreviations:**

1. CCHR	Cambodian Center for Human Right
2. CNRP	The Cambodian National Rescue Party
3. COMFREL	The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
4. CPP	Cambodian People's Party
5. EU	European Union
6. ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
7. ITU	International Telecommunication Union
8. MPT	The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication
9. NEC	Cambodia's National Election Committee
10. RFI	Radio Free Asia
11. SMS	Short messaging system
12. SNSs	Social network sites
13. UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
14. UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
15. VOA	Voice of America
16. VOD	The Voice of Democracy

## 2. Introduction

Cambodia is not the biggest population nation in South East Asia since thousands of people were killed during the civil war in the 1970s. According to an article about “Cambodian Youth: Future Agents of Change?” by a Cambodian female blogger, Sopheap Chak released in a study on “Youth, Politics and Social Media in Southeast Asia: Trends, Events and Implications” by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in 2012, there are approximately 4.7 million youths (15-29 years old) based on the Population projections of Cambodia in 2012, and it is more than one-third of the whole population. Youth is the main enforcement for this country in the process of development and they are the future of the policy makers so they are very potential vehicle for the country as their participation in politic is much needed ([Vadrevu and Chak 2012](#)). Every year there are more than 300,000 youths who are eligible to vote in Cambodia and there are over four millions youth in 2014. With this number, youth will also be strongly influential in the next national election in 2018, according to Radio Free Asia (RFI) cited the report from Comfrel (The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia ([Vann 2014](#)).

There are many forms of political participation but social media networks platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been used by Cambodian youth through the digitalization and mobilization to participate in social and political forces lately; especially, after the fifth national assembly election on July 28, 2013. Throughout the election period, Facebook users took the advantage of their smart phones and computers to share information to report electoral irregularities on the polling day ([Kasztelan 2013](#)). The development of social media in Cambodia has happened because of the change of population in which the majority is lower than 30 years old need new media at the same time that social media started to get famous in the world and it is much easier to be accessed worldwide.

Another reason is the regional current in other Southeast Asian countries, providing more ICT accessed to individuals that pushes this country to increase the access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for the consumers. Affordable tools such as smart-phone, laptop, and tablet and the increased internet access have made social media so much more reachable. So affordable internet access as well as quick and easy mobile application are very much preferred for such a developing country like Cambodia ([Im 2013](#)).

## **2.1 Mobile Technology Enhances Youth Political Participation**

Mobile technology offers youth new social interactive communication, it is just like an open space for them to participate, give their voices, and make decision in policy. In the new technology age of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, mobile devices are better compact and extremely portable. In addition, as a result of satellite coverage, internet access is almost everywhere, even in the remote areas, and it is available to users at reasonable prices. According to a report on “Measuring the information Society 2013” by International Telecommunication Union (ITU), by the end of 2013 there were approximately 6.8 billion cellular devices, and this amount is almost as equivalent to the world population, whereas around 2.7 billion people were using the internet worldwide. Meanwhile, there is approximately 100 percent of the population that were covered by a mobile signal ([Susan Teltscher and Esperanza Magpantay 2013](#)). A report about Cambodian Elections process by Licadho in 2014 revealed the power link between mobile and social media that the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP); the increasingly disillusioned youth turned to social media to voice their discontent and the opposition responded, helping to mobilize a significant segment of the voting population; and the party received a noteworthy popularity boost days before the election with the return of its exiled leader, Sam Rainsy, to Cambodia. Taken together, this signaled a major shift in the electoral landscape ([Licadho 2014](#)).

There is no exception for Cambodia regarding mobile use’s explosion. According to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication (MPT), the number of mobile subscribers keeps growing readily from 19.1 million to 20.2 million (for each of the country’s 15 million people) per year and the number of Internet users also jumped (Cambodian Internet users—both landline and mobile—increased from 2.7 million to 3.8 million, a 42.7 percent jump) last year. Cambodian people started to use mobile phones even more because there are many functions that benefit them in terms of their interest usage along with the optional prices ([Ben 2014](#)).

Since, mobile technology can provide easy access to information relatively instantly; it is believed to have promoted the political mobilization happening around the world. This phenomenon is also emerging in Cambodian society. Hence, mobile phones and internet have been playing a vital role in the promotion of young Cambodian’s growing involvement in Cambodian politics ([Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements 2004](#)). In addition to a report by (MPT) in the late 2012 with the number of 2.7 million internet users,

there are one million Facebook users in the country. Those tools and applications including phone and internet enable Cambodian youths to use the most popular social networking platform Facebook (1) to spread political and electoral information and (2) to inform breaking news of sociopolitical and electoral affairs ([Ou 2013](#)).

## **2.2 Social Media, Social Network and Mobile Internet**

Social Media has become a very important key platform, significantly improving many forms of people's lives in term of social interaction between individuals– increasing percentages of them connecting to people not only their friends and family, but also to the worldwide web. Social media is the term used for online technologies and practices to share contents, opinions and information, to promote discussion and build relationships. Social media services and tools involve a combination of technology, telecommunications and social interaction. They can use a variety of formats, including text, pictures, audios and videos. A social networking service is a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections.

Asia is recognized as a top leader in telecommunication development as its population is 4,2 billion population represents 56% out of the world populations and equivalents 45% of the globe's users. By 31 December 2012, the number of internet users in Cambodia has improved in a large number and there were 742,220 Facebook subscribers according to the Internet World Stats. Although the number of internet users of Cambodia is low compared to other countries in the region but it enlarged a lot compare to the last few years that has only about 100,000. Facebook is widely used by Cambodian youths compare to other new media and has seen as a potential device to engage youth in Politics ([Internet World Stats 2014](#)). This reason will bring the study to explore the link between Facebook and Political predication.

By 2015, everyone could be accessible to ICTs and brings internationally agreed development targets even closer to the achievement according to the recent assessments by ITU in 2010 ([Todd 2013](#)). “ GlobalWebIndex's latest data shows that the internet now makes up 57 percent of global media consumption, with social media alone taking 26 percent of people's media time, more than TV's 23 percent” ([The Asia Foundation 2013](#)). The number of internet user is expecting to be rising more in the future as Google is preparing to build 180 satellites that will provide internet to serviced areas.

A strong increased number of internet usages in Cambodia in 2012 are around 60 percent, which stands up from 1.7 million users to 2.7 million users. Mobile technology is one of the most important tools for the government and youth to build stronger relationship and encourage more participation in political section. It helps youth to learn as well as to make decision through social media platforms that will benefit to the Cambodia development as youth will be the next generation of policy maker ([UNDP](#)).

### **2.3 New Media's Popularity and Increased Internet Access**

Social network sites (SNS), particularly Facebook, are growing popularity together with the accessible of mobile to internet and connect to mobile social networking application among the people; especially, for youth in Cambodia since 2009 comparing to “traditional media” ([Im 2013](#)). Although Cambodia has not used social media for many years like others, we know that it is very crucial for any kinds of education and development of this country. Cambodia has just been connected to the Internet since 1997 (ITU 2002). However, the numbers of Internet users of this country increased from 2,000 in 1998 to 74,000 in 2008 according to the (ITU) ([Minges, Gray, and Firth 2002](#)) and there is sixty percent high-pitched rise in internet using in the late 2012, rate at approximately 2.7 million users according to the Xinhua report in early 2013 ([Xinhua Xinhua](#)).

Social Media engage youth to participate in politics more than any other kind of media and Facebook has seen as the most popular tool that has conspicuously exploded for youth in this country. Youth in Cambodia try to use social media for many reasons such as keep connected-ness and get involve in activism and public events or meet new people. It is believed that the number of user will increase more as it is now easier to access the internet in the country than in the past five years since tools and the internet is available through the internet connection, Wi-Fi, Tablet, Laptop and smart phone ([Im 2013](#)). The sharp raise is also because of the expanded of internet infrastructure and growing knowledge on internet usage. According to a study reported shows that colleague students approximately using Facebook thirty minutes a day out of their everyday activities ([Al-Deen and Hendricks 2011](#)). Using the Internet starts to become very common nowadays among young users in Cambodia and the price is also more affordable from year to year and lately youth in this country start to use Facebook to upload, share and comment on many topics and politics is one among them. However, so far there is not any research yet of how the effectiveness of social media in

pushing youth participates more in politics and why they are likely to use social media to engage themselves more compare to other media tools.

YEAR	Users	Population	% Pen.	GDP p.c.*	Usage Source
2000	6,000	12,573,580	0.05 %	US\$ N/A	<a href="#">ITU</a>
2007	44,000	15,507,538	0.3 %	US\$ 648	<a href="#">ITU</a>
2009	74,000	14,494,293	0.5 %	US\$ 775	<a href="#">ITU</a>
2010	78,000	14,753,320	0.5 %	US\$ 805	<a href="#">ITU</a>
2012	742,220	15,458,332	5.0 %	US\$ 820	<a href="#">FB</a>

**Figure1: Internet Usage and Population Statistics**

Note: Per Capita GDP in US dollars, source: International Monetary Fund ([Internet World Stats 2012](#)) Cambodia Statistics [National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia - NIS](#)

### 3. Research Question and Hypothesis

This study suggested that Facebook is an outstanding space for youth to air their concerns about the elections and it was one of the very few platforms with independent information that has been increasing its popularity among user; especially, youth in Cambodia. With this new trend and since most media are controlled by the Cambodian government and were peddling pro-government news, Facebook is seen as the potential site for political involvement with democracy environment which could lead a political change in Cambodia. Seventy percent of all Cambodians are below the age of 35; they are young and not afraid to say what they think. They have great opportunity to use Facebook in this well-developed technology age to discuss and debate among each other over the political issues. Moreover, they can also process direct communication and condemnation with political decision-makers more widely.

Concerning the trend, the cause of political change through the young participation via social media site Facebook in a developing country like Cambodia, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Freedom of expression in Cambodia is still limited. Traditional media is affiliated with the government and its alliance. Social media site is seen as the safe opened place to share information, ideas, opinions and experiences among the users and to air people's concerns and condemnation.

H2: Cambodian youth start to use Facebook to upload, share and comment on various topics including social issues and politics is one among those. This is a new trend that youth has the chance to get involved in politics as well as participate in political communication with political actors directly and widely through the potential mean of social network site Facebook.

H3: Social Media could play a role in making the new government more transparent and accountable. Social Media platform, Facebook, has currently been attracting a big amount of users to get involved in political participation. It is a place for social justice and democratic debates and will eventually lead to a change in political culture in Cambodia.

Deriving the answers over the main insights in this study discussed above, I also aim to respond to those research questions below:

Q1. Why do Cambodian youths use social media to engage themselves in politics do and why Facebook is the most popular social media platform they are more likely to use?

Q2. How do Cambodian youths use social media in political engagement?

Q3. What are the impacts of Cambodian youth's engagement in Politics through social media on the society?

#### **4. Bibliographic Review (State of the Art)**

To get to know the detail of this research, the awareness of the previous studies by other researchers and other related information are worth reviewing. It is necessary to understand why the younger generation of Cambodia intends to use new media rather than traditional media.

##### **4.1 Motivation Associated With the Use of Facebook**

In the new age of technology, social media sites have increased massively globally. Especially, youths are generally attracted by social media site Facebook.com with the motivation behind the usage. So far, there are many studies conducting to examine the reasons of Facebook usage among university students who used this famous site for various intentions. For instance, in 2011 N. Dogruer and R. Eyyam conducted a study to explore the motivation factors of students for using Facebook at the Eastern Mediterranean University.

The study predicted that youth used Facebook.com because they want to (1) Self-expression, (2) Media Drenching and Performance (as they check if photo/video albums update regularly ; and for the expectation from the people who liked adding new photos, (3) Passing Time, (4) Information Seeking,(5) Personal Status, (6) Relation Maintenance, and (7) Entertainment. The result revealed that 4 predictions of the study went opposite to the literature review and only (6) Relation Maintenance, and (7) Entertainment are the main purpose of the use of Facebook ([Dogruer and Eyyam 2011](#)).

T. Macafee also explored the use of Social media networking for Political engagement and site Facebook continued to be a place for individuals, especially the young ones, to engage politically. Social media users' motivations for using these sites were related around society, information, entertainment, and self-presentation. In addition, the study suggested that "The motivations and relationships between information seeking and political attitudes and behavior may be different and may illustrate a different "type" of political Facebook user" ([Macafee 2013](#)). In connection with this, a recent 2013-study by [Pi, Chou, and Liao \(2013\)](#) also raised the purpose of knowledge sharing as it is an open environment that people could use to express their opinions as well share their knowledge widely all over the world.

#### **4.2 Youth and Political Participation**

The political participation of youth is a field of study that has gained its popularity in the Social Sciences. The subject is better informed when one takes an interdisciplinary approach to the matter, such as the fields of sociology, psychology, cultural studies and mass communications ([Vadrevu and Ramli 2012](#)).

The number of youth in Cambodia is more than one-third of the whole population. Youth is the main force who can build strong national movement. They are the future nation builders and their participation in politics is very essential for the process of country development. Moreover, they are considered the main social force that sparked the revolution and bring change in the society.

Based on a study by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Singapore in 2012, one can participate by being active in political parties or in events organized by political parties. Moreover, it stated that political participation must be seen in a broader manner. Citizens have various spaces to participate in the age of advanced technology, increased civil awareness and



the blurring of public-private boundaries. The study also indicates that “Both Malaysian and Indonesian youth do show concerns for the political development in their respective country. Both indicate that a strong democratic system does require the existence of a good opposition; however, the level of political participation in both countries is rather limited. An area of concern is the fact that both Malaysian and Indonesian youth are willing to have Hudud Law implemented in the country” ([Vadrevu and Ramli 2012](#)).

“Young people move more directly into action, or participate in political and policy processes or in social movements (whether at a local, regional or global level) a broader set of change theories can impinge, which have implications for the kind of strategies and skills necessary to advance progressive change,” according to the report by Eoin Collins and Hel  ne Clark in 2013. The report also defined the theory of change that could maintain youth to create positive, equitable and sustainable change by their participation in politics, community or society together with leadership skill to work at local or global levels ([Collins and Clark 2013](#)).



**Figure2:** A theory of change underpinning a number of strategic approaches in this respect is that developed by TakingITGlobal, an organization that focuses on facilitating global education, social entrepreneurship and civic engagement for young people worldwide ([Collins and Clark 2013](#)).

It is perceived that youth in Cambodia are more actively participate in the politics. For instance, during the National election on July 28, 2013, there are approximately 3.5 million out of 9.5 million voters who registered that are between the ages of 18 and 30, this is according to the National Election Committee. The statistics surely shows the participation of Cambodian youth during the election ([Cambodia’s National Election Committee 2013](#)).

According to Voice of America (VOA) in 2013, youth integrate themselves more in political engagement as the election approached, “in the past few months, an unprecedented number of Cambodians under the age of 30 have begun participating in the political process, holding rallies, volunteering and posting on social media during election campaign”. This could lead to positive social change in the country ([Khoun 2014](#)).

A month before Cambodia's general election, Cambodian government announced a directive banning local radio stations from airing foreign programmes, including RFI and VOA's Khmer-language services, during the campaign and the election period. So this forced the public back stronger into social network, Facebook, to get access to information they wanted about the political activities of the political parties. It is said that both social media and internet is the main movement to change the dynamics of the election politics worldwide and Cambodian is one of those countries with youth engagement ([Soeung 2013](#)).

Young Cambodians are actively participating and show their courage for this purpose of changing the better society. Internet as well as the introduction of social media, users clearly have greater chance to show their ideas and concerns related to politics for electoral campaign involvement. Facebook and other new media applications widely used by young people have been realized as a potential vehicle to re-engage youth in political debate. Technology and networks offer them the ability to communicate straight with candidates and parties- from contributing to party and making comments in blogs to posting article about politics on websites ([Oates 2008](#)).

According to Cambodia Communication reviews (2011), young people in Cambodia have access to new media and they really need it in everyday life. The report also revealed that like it or not, people who use new media especially young people are changing both the way they think and behave toward what they see in real society like romance, education, work, belief, identity. Moreover, people access the internet to read news online because it easier for them in so many ways and to catch with the new trend ([PEOU 2011](#)).

#### **4.3 Traditional Media vs New Media**

Traditional or old media refers to means of communication and expression that have existed since before the arrival of the Internet. These traditional media includes television, radio, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and other print publications. Social or new media

are the terms used to describe the new generation of digital, computerized, or networked information and communication technologies. These can take many different forms, including internet forums, blog, wikis, podcast-, picture-, music- and video sharing. Google Groups, online news, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and Twitter, podcast, webcast, and even the short messaging system (SMS), are all new media. Social media has derived from day to day a very common and proficient way of getting informed ([Mangold and Faulds 2009](#)).

New media in this recently developed age enables an immediate, informative, intelligent, interactive platform for discussion and debate. With the presence of the new platform, everybody is allowed to become a citizen journalist at free of cost with global reach that they could not get this kind of great offer from the old media. It allows people to participate in events and interact with communities over long distance and that is the reason why it is considered a crucial role in connecting people all over the world. It has the potential to reach individuals widely and at unbelievable speed ([PEOU 2011](#)).

The emergence of this new media attracted the younger generation by its laidback means of getting information with internet-based technology accessed, smart/hand phones, tablet, ipad or computer which provides them information of their choices at anytime, anywhere while traditional media such as newspaper, magazine, radio and television bring the outside world into audience's home with set schedule which is more limited. They need to wait to read news or watch any broadcasting program they want to. Whereas, with new media, they could re-read or watch anything they want at any time as long as it is availed. This has taken traditional media to a challenge and it is changing the participation habits of the users ([Qi 2011](#)).

#### **4.3.1 Cambodian Press and Situation**

The situation of Cambodian press has improved and there is still restriction, self-censorship and harassments. Most of broadcast and print media in the country is affiliated with political actors. News or information on old media platform including newspaper, radio, and television are mostly protocol, without balance and has trend to pro the government. More notably, it is generally known that Cambodian media mostly owned by state/government, individuals who has a good relationship with the government and a joint by private company with those who allied with politician ([UNG 2011](#)).

There is an obvious example that the run government used its power to ban local radio stations from airing international broadcaster in Khmer language including the RFI and VOA during the campaign period just one month before the election date on July 28, 2013 ([Licadho 2014](#)). This is just a short ban but it affected to people as they are likely to trust news in programs broadcasted by these western broadcaster more than the local ones that controlled by the government. As a result, people has used Facebook as the main source of news and air their voice and criticism then ([Soeung 2013](#)).

All the Khmer-language newspapers are in full controlled and all their publication are for the sake of the ruling party and politician not for the public. That reflected the media situation press is still limited and the freedom of expression is a concern because it is different from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) which stated that “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” ([Eldis 2005](#)). Based on a book published by Institute of Asian Studies in Singapore articulated that during the national assembly in 1988, TV and radio-- considered as the main platform of news and information source—covers on the state-run party CPP up to 446 times while featured other parties only 27 times of the first two-week of July. CPP use its power to control media and even dominate the National Election Committee, according to UN report ([Heng 2002](#)).

Recently, 02 May 2014, a reporter from The Voice of Democracy (VOD) was beaten by a group of 10 Daun Penh district security guards in Phnom Penh Capital City while he was covering news and taking photograph about the election march near Freedom Park. He was seriously injured included a broken cheekbone and was sent to get treatment at Bangkok’s Bumrungrad Hospital that cost him \$ 15,000 for the complicated and expensive surgery. Though VOD filed a complaint over this attack against the Phnom Penh Governor Pa Socheatvong and the two Daun Penh district officials, up to now there is no solutions from those officers still ([ODOM 2014](#)).

However, the arrival of new media with more widely internet accessed together with smartphone, tablet, ipad make people’s usage broader and more interactive between people. Cambodians are more likely to use social media networking; especially, Facebook as a crucial and free place to inform, educate, and be influential among themselves. Individuals see Facebook as an independent media that they could access to various kinds of news, videos,

pictures and other messages. This new emergence of social media mean has helped boosting citizen engagement into the political predication as they could directly communicate and send their messages to the political actors in the country as Facebook acts like a bridge ([PEOU 2011](#)). As a result, it is no wonder to say that freedom of press through new media is faster and easier compare to the traditional media. Number of people using social networking site Facebook keep gaining and it is a trend which caused concern to old media such as television and radio. Many local and international media agencies created their own pages on social network, Facebook, so people do not need to go to the original programs or websites. It means that they could access to various websites or pages of other institutions through Facebook.

#### **4.3.2 Transformation Nowadays with Technology**

There is a study by Shobha Vadrevu in 2012 indicated that in the future political parties and civil societies must engage youth into political participation. “First, internet allows for the advancement of democratic values such as openness, consent and accountability. Second, it helps to build citizenship skills by providing youth with political information leading toward better political problem solving. Third, the internet can lead toward political mobilization—as examples in both the Korean and Japanese elections. Finally, it can help to force a more liberal or progressive politics.” This study indicates that ICTs offer a space for the development of a participatory culture in politics ([Vadrevu and Hofmeister 2012](#)).

In addition to the study on “Youth, Politics and Social Media in Southeast Asia: Trends, Events and Implications” by [Vadrevu and Lim \(2012\)](#) also revealed that in Southeast Asian, Brunei, Singapore and Malaysia there are higher internet penetration rates. Though Cambodian has lower rate compare to other countries in the region but the increase of internet usage is highly. In 2012, the internet usage increased around 60 percent, which raised up from 1.7 million users to 2.7 million with 742,220 Facebook subscribers ([Internet World Stats 2012](#)). The statistic points out a sign of the relationship between politics and social media such as Facebook as a mobilizing force and a tool for political engagement.

Country	Number of Internet users	Internet penetration (%)	Number of Facebook users	Facebook penetration (%)
Brunei Darussalam	318,900	79.4	234,800	58.4
Cambodia	449,160	3.1	449,160	3.1
Indonesia	55,000,000	22.4	41,777,240	17.0
Laos	527,400	8.1	129,660	2.0
Malaysia	17,723,000	61.7	12,060,340	42.0
Myanmar	110,000	0.2	NA	NA
Philippines	29,700,000	29.2	27,033,680	26.5
Singapore	3,658,400	77.2	2,661,360	56.1
Thailand	18,310,000	27.4	13,276,200	19.9
East Timor	110,924	0.2	NA	NA
Vietnam	30,516,587	33.7	3,607,220	4.0

Source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm>

**Figure 3:** Internet and Facebook penetration in Southeast Asia as at 2011 done by Internet World Stats

In the study by ITU in 2013, Brahima Sanou Director Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) ITU stated that young people are the most active users of ICTs compare to others in the world. He also added that “Over 250 million people came online over the last year, and almost 40 per cent of the world’s population will be using internet by end of 2013. Mobile technology and services continue to be the key driver of the information society, and the number of mobile broadband subscriptions is close to 2 billion. Mobile-broadband network allows more people to connect to high speed networks and benefit from a growing number of applications and services. While both fixed- and mobile-broadband speeds continue to increase, the price of services is falling and ICTs are becoming more affordable: in the space of four years, fixed-broadband prices have dropped by an impressive 82 per cent” ([Susan Teltscher and Esperanza Magpantay 2013](#)).

Likewise, according to the Cambodia Center for Independent Media, one of the popular websites which could read until 10,000 visitors per day in Cambodia (VOD: [www.vodhotnews.com](http://www.vodhotnews.com)), articulated that youth show their engagement in politics and spend time reading online news every day via smart phone. It means that in Cambodia youth is also the most active users of ICTs and one main reason that pushed this movement is the fact that internet is easy to access in the country together with affordable tools such as smart-phone, laptop, and tablet ([Voice of Democracy](#)).

#### **4.4 Social Media Networking and Political Engagement**

There is a strong increase number of social media users and it keeps on growing. J.

Brenner and A. Smith reported that by May 2013, the number of online U.S. adults who use social networking sites increased up from 67% in the late 2012 to almost three quarters and equal to 72%, while there was only 8% of online adult used social media platforms in February 2005. The number of online adult using Facebook is more than Twitter's, though the number is growing. There is 18% of user as of May 2013, which increased more than twice from 8% of online adults used Twitter in November 2010 though it was just a stand-alone platform in February 2005 ([Brenner and Smith 2013](#)).

Social media is seen as social interaction through technology, it consist of websites that everyone uses to communicate, where users interact by tagging websites and searching through websites bookmarked by other people; The social news websites, where user interact by voting for articles and commenting on them. The Social Networking Websites; where users interact by adding friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups and having discussions. This is based on the study of International Journal of Business Research and Management (IJBRM) in 2011. This study points out that social media websites are potentially effective on revolution in Egypt in 2011 and Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are the most effective websites during the revolution ([Chebib and Sohail 2011](#)).

Social media is a new paradigm for communications that is making surprising changes to the political and social landscape of the world. Social media has become a potential for Korea's government in making effective and transparency policy with a fast and low cost way to disseminate policy information, attain public feedback and communicate with citizens. Moreover, it offers stronger connectivity between users as it is easier to share information faster to a lot of audiences while it is seen that people in Korea can express their sight to politicians and others on networks such as Facebook and Twitter ([PARK, CHOI, and PARK 2011](#)).

It is not different; Facebook and Twitter have become the main social network platforms of social and political forces in South Africa with the emergence of mobilization. With mobile technology and social networks, youth political participation is by engaging them through various mediums of interaction and more importantly, present decision makers must be cognizant of the fact that youth today have greater aspirations than their parents, more information that can be factored into their own decision making process. They find their voices, and use their voices through the internet ([Hyde-Clarke 2012](#)).



Based on a research study by [PEOU \(2010\)](#), Cambodian students have rapid growth to internet access in the country and the purpose of using the internet is information seeking. There are three groups among internet users. First of all, “Comfort” indicates the group that feel comfortable in using internet without any worries or nervous mood. Second, “Optimism” refers to those who have positive ideas about the internet on themselves, other people and society. Last, “Enthusiasm” specifies those who are excited in using internet and want to challenge themselves in order to learn more about the development of the internet. So it is truly worth studying a new trend that happens to youth interactive engagement in politic through social networking sites in the developing country like Cambodia since up to now most of the traditional media including newspaper/magazine, radio and television are owned and controlled by the government ([CARLSON 2014](#)).

#### **4.4.1 Facebook and Youth Political Participation**

Among hundreds of social network sites, millions of users daily access and update their pages. It is a great change that people turn to spend more time for online and mostly with one of the most popular social network site, Facebook.com. Socialization is the key point, which is dragged the users to enter on the social site. Creating an account, adding friends, accepting friends, commenting on friends’ page, chatting, and updating status are the initiative concepts to keep and maintain the relationship in social network. Facebook is a popular social media website which was launched in February 2004, exclusively for Harvard student and the interaction between users started from adding friends or following, or sending request. These will encourage the users to communicate amongst themselves in social network. In social network, users select many topics to discuss which depends on the favor of users ([Facebook 2014](#)). Facebook site is created to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. It enables users to create individual profile or personal page which allow them to communicate among each other with global reach. They enable people to post updates about what is on their mind or what they are doing and also keeping track of the activities of their friends and family. In general, the interactive communication between users via SNS is processed through variety of tools including chatting, sending private message ([Grabowicz 2014](#)). People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what’s going on around them and all over the world. Registered by 829 million daily active users on average in June 2014 and there is approximately 81.7% of our daily active users are outside the U.S. and Canada though it is originally from U.S ([Facebook 2014](#)).



So far there is also an article saying that people couldn't even live without Facebook for 10 reasons as it has a big influence on their lives ([Team 2014](#)):

- (1) When you approve of something, even offline, you have a strange compulsion to click an invisible 'Like' button.
- (2) You get the news on Facebook.
- (3) You plan for or get invited to events through Facebook.
- (4) You message people on Facebook instead of texting, emailing, or calling them.
- (5) You rely on Facebook to communicate with distant family and old friends.
- (6) You aren't really friends with someone until you've added them on Facebook.
- (7) When something important happens to you, sharing it on Facebook is automatic.
- (8) When applying for a job, it matters what your public Facebook timeline looks like.
- (9) When your romantic relationship changes, it needs to be changed on Facebook, too.
- (10) Abstaining from Facebook makes you feel deprived and in the dark.

A study covers on the U.S. presidential election in 2008 found out that the young undergraduate students in the Midwestern United States tend to participate much in politics on Facebook. Furthermore, it was notably exploded even the way they think of political activity, as well as their political engagement on Facebook and witness in the site. During the election, “social network sites such as Facebook allowed users to share their political beliefs, support specific candidates, and interact with others on political issues” ([Vitak et al. 2011](#)).

Facebook site is one of the most popular social media means that enhance a great interactive communication truly worldwide. This platform is also a strong tool to enhance direct communication between the public and political actors ([Newton 2006](#)). Facebook is the most popular social networking site among users in Cambodia though Cambodia has just connected to internet in 1997, social media has exploded its popularity so fast during these past few years. Moreover, we can see that during and after the parliamentary election in Cambodia in July 28, 2013 the movement of youth on the political topic on social network, Facebook, is in blast. According to a report by Cambodian Center for Human Right (CCHR) stated that Facebook is most popular platform of social media compare to other platforms and it has 508,820 users in Cambodia but this statistic does not show the actual number because some users have many profiles. Also, some groups, organizations, companies and also have their own profile and sometimes more than one on Facebook account or page. The report also indicates that there are three main purposes of using Facebook; it is for fun, socializing and making new friend but some institution also take advantage of Facebook to share and spread information about their work ([Cambodian Center for Human Rights 2012](#)).

A research study by [Saray \(2010\)](#) found out that “Facebook has increasingly become integrated into Cambodian Internet users’ daily experience as more than half of the users surveyed used Facebook at least once a day and another one-third used it several times a week.”

Furthermore, Facebook now has become a very potential network; it is helping youth in Cambodia to know how to consider more about news contents. People intend to believe and access to information through news on Facebook rather than traditional media such as newspaper, radio and television because it consumes more time. One more importance thing, newspaper, radio and television are dominated and it is not balanced plus its intention to promote the government. News reading on newspaper or television is likely to drop down since it consumes much time and it does not make them convenience to read. Furthermore, television and radio in Cambodia are political affiliated. They produce contents which is not ethical and bias for the audiences so Facebook is like the democratic page to get faster information for youth. When people ask about any information the answer is that check Facebook and young people intend to use this network to get news not only entertain and social themselves but know how to analysis news as there are both fake and true information posted on this network site ([VOA 2014](#)).

#### **4.4.2 Political Actors Use Online Campaign to Nominate Voter**

Social Media and politics in the modern world have become increasingly active and it is a new mean to eliminate barriers to free flow of information between the political decision-maker and the public. Politicians use new media as a political communication tool to gain more support and popularity. A study by Ltai Himelboim indicated the definition of “Political Communication” as a perception of activities involved by politicians and individuals through media is used as a public forum and personal political discussions. Similarly, he has also raised that “political participation” is an interpersonal activities such as talking face-to-face with family, friends and strangers. Moreover, political communication also defined as activities that the public used to make influence on the structure and selection of government policies ([Ltai Himelboim 2012](#)).

It is not different from [Ltai Himelboim \(2012\)](#), Maria Ilcheva also referred to the term “political communication” to those activities performed by individuals, aims to influence and

seek support to the government and politics. The quality of political participation under democracy policy is measured by the willingness to three components including free election, rule of law and civil society while the quality of political communication under communism is according to parochial contacting paternalistic relations, role of the nomenklatura, religious expression, communist party and other organizations, and education from class struggle and international solidarity to ultra-nationalism. Furthermore, Dario Moreno also figured out the three main reasons behind political communication. First of all, “political socialization” is the process through which an individual acquires his or her own political orientations." Second, “agents of socialization” are numerous, including the family, the media, and schools, government. Third, “participation rates” are a function of resources and civic skills ([Ilcheva 2010](#)).

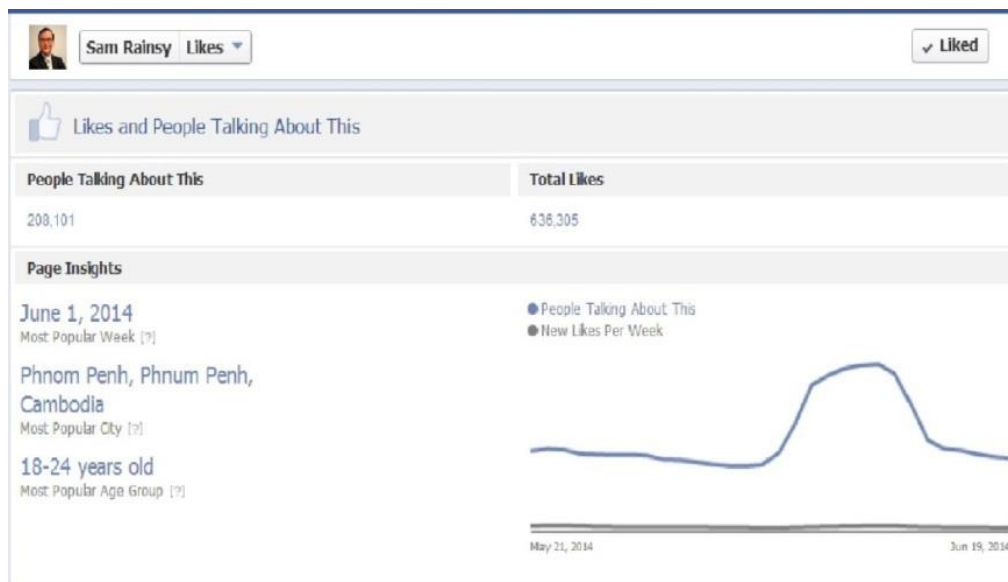
“Communication means the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people information,” according to Oxford dictionary ([Hornby 2000b](#)) and “Politics is the activities involved getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society” ([Hornby 2000a](#)). In addition, in a study by D. Petralia political communication is the paradigm of the universal distribution of communication services includes gathering, elaboration and transferring information. This study also examined how the information and communication technologies have changed the social, civil and political aspects of the Europe world that “citizens can be free of expressing ideas and opinions maintaining the basis for a true democracy with freedom and equality for all people.” The communication and information technology is considered as an important strategy of European Opinion (EU) to present the economic sector and to increased completion in the industrial” ([Petralia 2010](#)) . Social media platform, Facebook, has been an incredibly and integral part of the country’s political development and transformation as well as a citizen journalist space and not just one way communication. News, information, video, picture on new media could be uploaded through this interactive means and could be accessed much faster and even easier. Moreover, those contents changed also be deleted, changed and corrected after the published, shared, or uploaded that make the user more convenient.

In Cambodia since Facebook has gotten a massive growth in the number of users and it platform allows both citizens and politicians to take part in political discussion or to share political content publicly. Also, the network site Facebook is being used to communicate specific political interpretations of issues in the hope of gaining public support for political

policies. For example, U.S. politicians were seen to lead this strategy for the election campaign. One noticed thing is when Barack Obama was being able to successfully employ social media for his election campaign ([Wattal 2010](#)). As a result, we can say that social network provides further prestige and power of the party and citizen's direct channel of communication with voters and other influential interests group.

What is more surprising about political public relations in Cambodia is that Political parties also created their own page to keep update the follower about their activities and some politicians also created their own pages to post news or image related to their party. For instant, Mrs. Mu Sochua, a significant member of the opposition party candidate who has more than 3,000 friends on Facebook logs in Facebook has usually post or uploads images not lower than three time a day. She said that that Facebook gives people more room to express their opinions, and to receive more diverse views. "Facebook in Cambodia is changing the way the government and the public interact with each other, and is opening up channels of communications" ([Cambodian Center for Human Rights 2012](#)).

The strength of Facebook is to allow users to connect and organize. It also provides political actors with an effective means of reaching constituents and voters. It takes interaction by providing a public "wall" where members can write responses, either positive or negative, to politicians ([Small 2008](#)). It became really obvious, that Cambodian politicians take social media platform Facebook as a potential weapon for their election campaign in 2013 lately and the number of Facebook users keeps increasing up to now. During the election campaign, social media platform Facebook can also be successfully used by politicians to get popularity, disseminate news/information to voters, communicate and discuss with them actively. On the one hand, the opposition leader Mr. Sam Rainsy started to create his own page on this social platform on April 22, 2013 that is just few months before the national election. The main purpose of this creation is gain support by keeping the citizens informed through report, news. One more important aspects; is to criticize and report bad news about the government's activities that individuals are not enable to listen or watch through old media that mostly affiliated to the government ([Meyn 2013](#)). With more than 600,000 fans on his page, there are more than 200,000 people talking about it. On the other hand, among the page supporter, youth –18-24 years old – are the most popular age group and those mostly are from capital city Phnom Penh where the country's economic mainly growth ([Sam 2014](#)).



**Figure 4:** Example of Facebook's Politician Page, Sam Rainsy, June 19, 2014

Since it is very particularly that social media network could be successfully adapted to contact and discuss with voters as well as to disseminate important information to them. Especially, young people have been inspired to political topics through opposition party leader, prime minister Hun Sen immediately began posting more updates on his Facebook page about the achievement of government and responding what the CNRP attack the governance of ruling (CPP) ([Licadho 2013](#)). Since his page creation on 28 June 2010, as of 22 May 2014, there are more than 100,000 people talking about it out of a total like of more than 300,000 people. That number is a bit far low compare to Sam's. Similarly, youth with age between 18-24 years old is the most popular group and most popular city is Phnom Penh. The main content in his page is mainly about the government's achievement and work ([Sen 2014](#)).



**Figure 5:** Example of Facebook's Politician Page, PM. Hun Sen, June 19, 2014

The important link between Cambodian youth in political participation and new media, Facebook, is really worth to study in such a developing country like Cambodia. The potential usefulness of this kind of application for creating a new trend of public communication and digitalization political action is highlighted recently in Cambodia, Facebook has been used to communicate and target between potential youth and political parties so Facebook is a suitable Internet space for political engagement or communication. Social media allows individual to participate in politics and democracy among each other.

#### **4.5 Facebook has impact on Cambodian Politics**

The social networking site Facebook enables a broader transformation and emerged as a tool with potential than traditional media for promoting more interactive political communication efficiently among interest groups in this new technology age. Facebook mean influences individuals and opticians thinking. Being one of the most popular and trafficked platform, Facebook has been registered by 757 million active users, one millions of whom are Cambodians. Facebook promote a more professional discussion among supporters and it helps to change public's beliefs towards outcome of the election ([Williams, and, and Gulati 2008](#)).

Cambodian political parties, especially, the opposition party (CNRP) have been inspired by the Barack Obama in using social media for political campaigns. Both public and political actors have increased their use of the Internet for political campaigns. Political parties adopted Facebook as a free tool to inform and communicate with voters, collecting donations, fostering community, and organizing events. "Sam Rainy, the CNRP leader employed young people equipped with video cameras and laptops to track their every move and post updates to Facebook before and after the election" ([Meyn 2013](#)). Drawing from the rapidly growth of Facebook use will help the CNRP be connected with the public since this would never happened before as most media outlets including newspaper, radio and television are controlled by the ruling party (CPP). The Facebook election within Cambodian politics has shown the impact in society through the result of the July's election. It is truly revealed that it is very significant for the CNRP to take over 22 seats from the very powerful ruling party which has run the country since 1985. The opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) has claimed its noticeable victory with a huge number of more than 600,000 Facebook supporters over all other political parties in the country. With the result of the July election this big opposition party also proved itself to be potential candidate to win over the Prime Minster Hun Sen who claimed himself the longest serving leader in South East Asia

and is one of the longest serving prime ministers in the world, having been in power through various coalitions for 29 years so far.

## **5. Research Methodology / Work Programme**

### **5.1 Sample**

To understand deeply the topic and to explore the potential that SNS via technology at this digital age offers youth to get engaged in the political communication process through well-known social media platform Facebook and why youth intend to actually use Facebook for this purpose in Cambodia, this research study will be conducted in qualitative approach, using in-depth interviews. The sample is selected among 20 Cambodia youth between 18 to 30 years old (10 females and 10 males) included four NGOs staff, four media persons, four colleague students from some universities in Phnom Penh Capital City and those students will also be selected in different majors and 4 other youths.

### **5.2 Procedures**

The in-depth interview was done because it is a good approach to study about the change of youth in political participation through social media in Cambodian society. The in-depth-interview can go any angle of the research topic accordingly to the responds from the target group but it was not allowed the interview go without limited time.

An interview guide is used to guide the sample to run and process this in-depth interview properly by not setting any limitation to the answer or question but don't let the interview go beyond the topic or scope of study purpose.

31 interview requests were sent. 13 females and 13 males youths were interviewed and those were drawn carefully, first from a personal network and later to include users from a diverse range of ties to the researcher. Those drawn interviews is chosen based on the observation on their background, Facebook used and the recommendation by those who are actively using this social media platform in multi-purpose included political engagement. With more than 2hours use per day spent on Facebook individuals were marked as frequent users. As of more than half of the participants used site Facebook.com between one to three hours a day ([Ljepava et al. 2013](#)).

All of the interviewees were directly contacted to their Facebook account through messaging to their inbox and got back their replied back very fast. Those 26 youths were



interviewed by Skype and Facebook through both voice and video call and 16 of them are living in Cambodia and the other four are students, studying abroad included France, Spain, and Thailand. During the time of the data collection, this network consisted of author's former and current classmates, acquaintances, professionals at both private and public sectors and at NGOs.

The interviews were fully conducted in April, May and July 2014 and it based on an interview guide focusing on their Facebook use and online behavior, main purpose of use, and their concepts on political change affected by social networking site Facebook and other follow up question that is importantly related to the research study. This also figures out the impact of new media toward Cambodian citizen and political environment in the country whether it is a good or bad trend in the country. Moreover, it is done to see how Facebook more are likely to be used by most youth who is more active, brave and understand more about new technology and new media use for political communication process.

New media is consider as a two-way and even many-may way communication, it enables individuals to share knowledge, experiences, opinions and ideas among each other. In political purpose, it also could improve the participation and democracy towards the citizen, and sometimes it can be an enabler for the main political debate or battle field. Each interview took about one hour and 45 minutes and all recorded with the interviewee's permission and then complied for analysis.

## **6. Finding and Discussion**

### **6.1 Facebook User and Their Motivation**

According to the analysis on motivation of Facebook users in Cambodia, there are four main reasons behinds and those are: Seeking information ([Macafee 2013](#)), socializing and friendship maintaining ([Dogruer and Eyyam 2011](#)), seeking entertainment ([Dogruer and Eyyam 2011](#)) and studying purpose ([Pi, Chou, and Liao 2013](#)).

1. Seeking information: getting access to all kind of news both national and international new. "Keep up with news" via SNS is a positive and significant of political participatory behaviors under democracy mean in the country as individuals couldn't find balance and truth stories via old media in the country as news published in traditional media is bias and affiliated with the government. One more thing, social media use for informational purpose is to keep themselves informed by accessing to



know what is happening in the country and also all around the world as new media is an interactive and intelligent platform which provides a faster news and information.

2. Socializing and friendship: keeping in touch and track with friends. They keep updating what are their friends doing and finding both old and new friends. Moreover, communication through Facebook is more interactive and it is for both work and fun.
3. Entertainment: telling friends with is on their mind, posting photos, sharing news or video in the purpose of getting mutual comment or debating, and chatting for fun.

The answer from all the despondences indicated that there are two types of engagement that youth use to participate in politics.

4. Study purpose: keep updating assignments and discuss things among the study group on Facebook and learning other thing including new technology, economic and looking for scholarship programs.

## **6.2 Facebook Enables Youth to Use For Free Expression**

Freedom of expression in Cambodia has not improved a lot, most of the media outlets are affiliated with the ruling political party CPP in the country which is known by the majority. Most of the covered news is all about government and its achievement. It is seen that even the peaceful protests and feature related to the any oppositions to the government could never been seen and watched publicly ([CARLSON 2014](#)). Since most of media are censored and citizen could not access to all kinds of news together with balance and reliable information, the emergence of new media, making social networking platforms especially Facebook becomes a growth popular space for individuals to uncensored information. New media even has become a well-known platform for Cambodian youth to share, debate and discuss the political issue and other topic related to their concerns.

Facebook is the most popular networking sites in political context comparing to other platforms such as --Twitter, YouTube, Myspace, Google+, Line, Viber and online blog -- and it is the most used by individuals in Cambodia because there are more people using it and it has friendly use that implies to the study by [Vitak et al. \(2011\)](#) social network that describes that Facebook allowed users to share their political beliefs, support specific candidates, and interact with others on political issues. One-third of the users interviewed said since the press freedom is not fully free in the country, they could only see social media site like Facebook as the a free and safe mean to air their voice over the long distance with a faster, interactive and cheap way. They criticism over rapid a tight grip on the country's media which considered as

an importance source made by the government. They have no fear to post, comment, or share any information/image/video related to politics as those content is balance. One more reason, the internet and social media has not been censored yet. The reason that so far the ruling party uncensored those means is may be like that the people in the rural areas truth could access widely only to those media (radio, television, newspaper) rather than the internet and new media because internet access that allow them to use social media is not provide enough in the country. As of the July election season, Khieu Kanharith, Cambodian Minister of Information said that Cambodian government does not have any plans to shut down Facebook, but it warned “improper” content that people used to post and share a lot on this platform.

However, recently there was a leak of a draft of cybercrime law which initially drafted silently behind closed doors, without the input of civil society in 2012. This showed the serious threats to freedoms by making certain speech and other actions online punishable by fine and prison time. 15% of the respondent in this study said if this cybercrime law is passed they would be more cautious with their political expression to avoid the defamation or any abuses any high ranking officials of the Cambodian ruling party and their alliances. This new Cambodian’s drafted law would also be undermining the process of E-expression or E-democracy. Regarding this matter, one of the users said Facebook is still a safe enabler to the people to raise their concerns and condemn the government freely as they could create fake account and their identity would not be discovered. (Facebook user 15)

“There is no a big deal or concern regarding the new cybercrime law, I still could use fake account to express my idea, opinion on Facebook so it is still a safe place for expression. No one would accuse me of any fine or detain me by the lawsuit if they do not know my real identity” (Facebook user 12).

One more thing, people tend to use Facebook more than other social media platforms such as Twitter because it has friendly look, which provided users with a way to set up a personal page or profile to which they could post and updates on what they were doing with a longer words permitted together with other features (like, comment, tag, send, options, frictionless share), and enable users to tag people, time, location, file and emotion with privacy setting tool. It also allows them to keep track of the activities of friends, colleagues, politician and family. On the one hand, Cambodian users are more using Facebook than other platforms that made the uses interviewed back Facebook more. On the other hand, users can display and follow up everything through new-feeds that alert on their home pages including news/information, photos, videos, music. Moreover, Facebook, in 2001, has also other new

features “subscribe” that provide individuals to “Follow” other postings and they do not need to be friends with those people who belongs to those postings. Another new feature that was introduced in 2013 is embedded page, that make people could edit/fix posts that others made to their own page ([Grabowicz 2014](#)).

### **6.2.1 Facebook Use for Informational Motivation**

“Facebook may be a better mean in terms of achieving a true public sphere than anything that has come before it. There is no other online community that connects members of real-world communities (geographic, ideological, or otherwise) in such an effective way” ([Westling 2007](#)) Almost of all the Facebook users said this social networking site has been a great platform for generating discussion and conversation among each other about news inform or any stories both social and entertainment news. They could be getting informed more widely over the long distance as news organizations have their own pages on social media through a fan page program on Facebook. When those news organizations published, uploaded or posted stories they would be receiving the new alert to important news articles. Fan page also enable to comment, like and share over news posted. Two of Facebook users in their study also shared their experiences that social network like Facebook is also help them a lot in their career as a journalist. They said beside keeping them informed and connecting with friends, Facebook, is a main source of mean that help them finding news angles to write for their news instigations. “Many people are using Facebook. News on Facebook is fast compare to the traditional media. People can just post or upload any stories when they can access to internet. I sometimes get new idea to cover news from what posted by individuals around some interests or specific topics” (Facebook user 18).

Using Facebook has become part of their everyday life. A total of all respondents used Facebook more than once a day and the majority them used site Facebook.com between one to three hours a day, while the majority used it around 10 to 15 minutes. Moreover, some of the participant interviewed used Facebook between 30 to 50 minutes per their each log in. Most of the participants used Facebook more than one between one to three hours a day because their work related to social media and it is the fact that internet access is widely received together with acceptable price and affordable tool like smart phone ([Im 2013](#)). Mostly they used this social networking site at home, workplace and internet café and used it more than once a day because it is easier to access to ICTs for the consumers as internet is increasing provided in the country together with affordable tools such as hand-phone, ipad,

laptop, and tablet. It means that wherever they are free and no matter of time they will use Facebook ([Im 2013](#)).

Before the arrival and the growth popularity of social media platform Facebook, people checked their e-mail frequently but now users checked Facebook before e-mail and one-third of them even check Facebook first after they got up every morning before doing anything else. All of the users interviewed first introduced to Facebook by their friends and their first purpose to use this site is to communicate with friends and learn new technology that they have never known it before. Most of the participants stated using Facebook between 2008-2009 - when they started to enter universities in Phnom Penh capital city where internet is easy to access ([Soeung 2013](#)). The number of Facebook user keep increasing up to now ([Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements 2004](#)).

Mobile phone and other application such as ipad, tablet and laptop enable youth to use Facebook as those young people are attracted to the easy means of getting information with internet based admissions which provide them information of their choice anytime, anywhere. ([Im \(2013\)](#)) They need not have to wait for any broadcasting schedule to be connected to get the information. The modern revolution enables individual to become a journalist or people call “citizen journalist.” Citizens are widely access to whatever information they want, apart from airing their views online via social media sites at little cost, faster speed, cheaper price with a long distant reach. Nothing like this has ever been possible before in the country that is the main reason that the push of Facebook weakening the grip of government-owned media, including newspaper, radio and television, which they have shown no more truth in those media outlet and feature a big criticism on the famous social platform that has been a massive growth of use and continue growing the number of usage and support. “No one can hide the truth forever” and here with social media site Facebook we can find out everything. In Cambodia some secrets was successfully hidden before the presents of new media as most media outlets is tightly controlled by the government to hide its scandal from the public. Yet via uncensored platform Facebook, the government could no longer hide what it wants any more as there is boundary or limitation of user accessed. Everyone can find out social injustice, poor social security, and other unusual activities post updated and they could spread those information to other people, especially, among young interest group to determine the fact that has been happening in the country that couldn’t be seen on television (Facebook User 15).

Almost all of respondents revealed that their lives would be difficult without Facebook as this site has become integrated into Cambodian Internet users' daily activities. They keep connecting with friends, family, and colleagues through Facebook as many of their networks are using Facebook. As of this digital age, they keep up with news through social media as it provides immediate information worldwide. "My life will be very difficult without Facebook...using this new media is very effective compare to other means because it keep me up fast news publish by many media organizations, especially, over political issues that keep posting and updating by a joined Cambodian Facebook youth group which I follow to get new update regarding political context in the society" (Facebook user 7). Drawing from that matter above, one of the respondents in this research study answered that without Facebook; it feels like losing connection from the world especially political stories. She added that television feature only one-sided news that intends always to pro the ruling party so it could not compare to Facebook which provides news from many sides with an immediate way. "If there is no Facebook I will not die but my life will be in difficulty interim communication and information access. It is a part of my life so I will be disconnecting from people that may make my life inconveniences. Individuals can be a citizen journalist via Facebook, there is citizen journalist more than professional journalist and there is more political news such as peaceful demonstration or gathering on this site" (Facebook user 5).

### **6.3 Youth and Their Facebook Use in Political Context**

Not every user is that much interested and courageous in political engagement and they attempt to take part in political context in different ways. There are two types of Facebook differentiation according to their aspects for political participation through well-developed social network Facebook: "external" and "internal" factor. More than half of users are in type of "external" or "visible" factor which they intended to use direct channel of communication via the most popular social network site Facebook by posting, chatting, sending private message, leaving public comments, linking to outside content and sharing photos and videos through individual profile or page of users ([Cohen et al.](#)). For instance, through sharing, disseminating, and exchanging personal ideas, social information and political issue to their friends, users can directly discuss and debate among each other over the long distance and immediate mean. The other type of factor according to the content is "Internal or Invisible" factor followed by 9 users in the study. It refers to silent participation that individuals keep up with news about politics but they do not directly post, share, like or comment on political issue. They want to know about what matter in the society – analysis

news to know politician behavior– from many sources, they have read or seen through Facebook.

### **6.3.1 External Factor use via Facebook for Political Participation**

In the Internet age, social media is very attracted to young people due to its power of connecting people and allowing ones to share their ideas among larger interest group. Ones can use platforms like Facebook in the purpose of fun, education, connection and politics. One of the respondents who is well-known political blogger and is actively using Facebook for political content, revealed that Facebook used to use Twitter but turned to use Facebook because in Cambodia there is very few people are using Twitter and there is less than 10 actively user among nearly 100 ones. “Cambodian citizen are using Facebook more, there is very less twitter users compare to Facebook users so if I do not use Facebook I will be isolated from other people. To me Facebook is not a source of news but is where to know about youth behaviors and trend of society, what matter to them that they like to talk and discuss among each other. 50% of Facebook user from what I know is young people (18-24 year-old),” said (Facebook user 1), by adding that “I first used Facebook just to know new technology but later on more friends come to Facebook then start to use to keep connection with friends and to influence over story related to society and politics .

“Facebook is more interesting in using than reading books as it is a social network provider and it is hard to quit using this website. Many Cambodian people use this platform, especially, youth who are considered as potential game changer over the election so if this user Facebook as a mean to inform, it reaches more audiences.” He also said in the past people just read and talk to him when they met him face to face but dare not click “like” and make any “comments” on political information published on social network site Facebook so it means that they observed it. Later on, they start to like and comment on his posted news related to politics. Now there is a big change as they become more actively giving comments on the interest topics because of freedom through this platform.”

Being able to voice and share their idea, opinion, information, and another Facebook user has moved toward for this purpose to use it more than communication.

“Facebook is a priority platform where people can communicate among each other, one can disseminate information. Facebook is not only a site that we use to comment and like on any posts, but we also could voice our concerns or contact celebrity and politician. I have strong interest in political issue and I mostly share and discuss over this topic with my friends. I spend much time on making comment and discussion among interest group to get new ideas

from others on social issue and political problem sometimes around 30 minute during each log in” (Facebook user 4).

The explosion of Facebook users for political purpose has led to a great interest in the way people dare to post or comment on the interest issues. Young people became brave and active in expressing their political concept openly and widely, they are no more closed door to talk about politics like before (Facebook user 19). Users intends to use the advantage of social mean to take part mediated-communication – share or exchange both social and political contents among interest groups. One user in the study told that from his observation Cambodian people are more interested and brave to air their opinion over the post update on his page.

“When I post news stories related to politics on my page, many users give comment or click like. I noticed that 99% of them always criticize the government. From what I have observed, it is frankly that the many users dare to talk and share their interests or opinions over the social and political issues. Most users are likely to support opposition party than the government party” (Facebook user 16).

“I have shared a lot of social and political news including my own articles on platform Facebook to many of nearly of 5,000 friends so this is what I help other users to get informed and have a better analysis over the political landscape and trend in the country” (Facebook user 18).

“As a youth I am not afraid to share my idea over political issues. I dare to comment and share my ideas over political information that I think it is not right. We, youth has right to express our idea over politics and it is not a matter if we say something true and it is a reason for a better society change for the country” Facebook User (26).

Similarly, another user also revealed that, “I use Facebook to post and share my ideas or any news story I see in society – Facebook is my mass media mean– Before posting anything I think at least half an hour and mostly I try to post social, philosophy and social issue at least one a day. With regard to political sector, I want to bring awareness to my friends and other Cambodian citizens to know and analysis about political decision-makers behaviors via my post. Via Facebook we can tell something to the world, we are not silent anymore and if we don’t like anything we can inform the concerned persons for a better change” (Facebook user 2).

### **6.3.2 Internal Factor Use via Facebook for Political Participation**

Getting informed has greatly affected ones’ idea. What people know used to

accomplish in a day can be done in seconds via social media. Whenever we need to look for information, we get it fast and quick. People use new media in multiple factors or purpose and one of reason of social network sites usage is to news-related purpose ([Glynn, Huge, and Hoffman 2012](#)).

Based on the users interviewed, it is significant that they keep themselves inform about political issue and political decision-makers behaviors. They want to know what is up in the society but they do not want others to know their thought and the party they support. One among users discovered everything is on Facebook so it is a main source of news that we can get variety of information that we rarely find on television. She is a media person so she does not want people to know about her political trend. She keeps up the news and click “like” on both ruling and opposition party to know about their policy (Facebook user 11).

“I have never made any “comments” or “shares” any information related to politics but I keep myself informed. I make use of Facebook just to read news and know what is going on in the political environment and to learn more about political parties. From what I learned through news articles I read I will make a big decision on which party that I am going to vote for to lead the country.”

Communication and information dissemination among users is made via Facebook thoroughly and widely. This is the reason that everyone can see the true reality that discovered by variety of posts published on this popular site so people learned a lot more about the good and the bad that they did not know of before. Another user said she just kept track on current issue both social and political news but never showed her own interest or opinions over those information and politician. She would never make any direct comment, discussion or criticism because it is not safe on SNSs but she will only talk and discuss about politics with somebody who is much closer to her only (Facebook user 12).

“I do not use a fake account so I have never made any expression via social networking. Facebook is not safe...I used to share my ideas to comment on the ruling party youth activist and later on there were some friends told me to delete my post otherwise I may have problem and it may effect on position at work as I am an activist of the party. To me only people that created fake profile that dare to say or criticize on what they do not like about parties or political activists.”

It is not different from the all users mentioned above, one respondent interviewed stated that Facebook enables individual; especially, youth who are brave to share their ideas or news information regarding political content more than other type of people. Facebook is



democratic space where people could access all kinds of news from variety of source and the last updated news which help the public to learn, consider and analysis more than before (Facebook user 14).

In general, the study showed that the rising size of the political engagement through both “external” and “internal” factor –discussing or debating, sharing ideas and making comment as well as keep up news by seeking information –is a positive and significant predictor of people's social and civic and political participatory behaviors, which lead a change in political context in the country.

#### **6.4 Facebook’s Growing Influence on Cambodian Politics**

As the use of social media site has grown and continue growing, social media usage will not fade away. Individuals enjoy using this channel because there is no boundary. The power of Facebook enables a large number of users to be able to be together on the common interest that matter to them in a global reaches. It is seen that Cambodian citizens; especially, the younger generation comes to using sites like Facebook for social change. The impact of social media site like Facebook is strongly noticed and resulted in this study also. The explosion of Facebook usage contributed to better political awareness and change political culture in Cambodia. For instance, the ruling CPP lost its ballots from 90 seats– in 2008 election –to 68 seats out of a total of 123 seats in the National Assembly during the July’s election last year ([Meyn 2013](#)). The CPP dominated media feature of the election, it depended on the mainstream media which it controlled to give information to the electorate while the opposition party CNRP used new media which was faster, cheaper and reached a bigger audience to attract voters.

Social network site Facebook has brought a change to Cambodian political culture. It enables users to personalize the web contents about themselves. Drawing from a report by [Soeung \(2013\)](#) there are some political changes in the country and an example of political change is that:

“ The two main opposition parties merged into one party, the new Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) under the leadership of Sam Rainsy, who has now returned from self-imposed exile in France to join his deputy, Kem Sokha, also a seasoned politician, for last-minute campaigning.”

His study also indicates that “social changes –including social media –over the past five years, along with political changes, will likely ensuring that the CPP is short of its earlier landslide win.” It is very obvious that the ruling CPP still won the election as of July last year but it lost almost one quarters seats (nearly 25%) in the parliament. This is the impact of new media which is found out by this study too.

#### **6.4.1 Mindset Change Leads to Change in the Election Result**

The emerging technology and social media brought a great source of sharing and keeping up for information and ideas, for communication and participatory. Mediated political communication between political decision-makers and the public brings us a very unsettling prediction about the role of the media in the public sphere and democratic politics for social change. Mass media is a very crucial player that has immense power to dissemination information to public. Due to the variety of news from variety of sources that thousands of Cambodians receiving, a lead to a mindset change of people in making decision to vote for the election national election has happened. One of respondents in this study revealed via social network that people could access more news; as a result, they will do more analysis that movement contributed a political change in the country:

“There are two big political parties in Cambodia (CPP and CNRP) and I like both political pages on Facebook to get balance news. Now people could get more informed regardless of the political issue. When individuals could access more news, we can think better and analyze on what is good and bad or what is true or fake. This is a positive impact in society.” (Facebook user 9)

In addition, this user said it is very good nowadays as Cambodian citizens; especially, young people who are educated that they could receive news more than before through Facebook with their smart phone and they forwarded what they knew to their family. Facebook is very influence in the society and I sometimes read messages from political party’s page of this powerful site (Facebook user 9).

“Though CNRP is banned to do campaign or update information to audiences via television which controlled by the ruling CCP but they use Facebook as a mean of freedom and fairness. From what I observed, CNRP is the first-recorded party for its big victory for Facebook page over other parties” (Facebook user 24).

#### 6.4.2 Opposition Party Use Facebook to Attract Voters

Politics and the media tied grippingly together. Media plays a very important role in providing news to people. Connecting information to the people who read or watch is significantly affecting their ideas and decision making and that is why the Cambodian ruling party (CPP) dominated most media outlets thoroughly. Any unblemished coverage about the running party is online media. For instance, we often find that television stations or other media never broadcasted or portrayed any political programmes which criticize the government. “Events such as peaceful protests and displays of government opposition are perfectly hidden from the public on these media platforms, making the internet the only source of uncensored information for the citizens ([CARLSON 2014](#)).”

The presents of technology together with social network sites enables CNRP opposition leader to make online campaign to get supports from the citizens ;especially, youth. On the one hand, as the internet and (SNSs) is not censored, so it is a great chance for CNRP to grab this most popular platform to make direct and interactive political communication with people. This site allows the opposition party to inform and spread to voters the political news; especially, to feature its policy or strategy for a better change and display issues such as human rights, social justice, corruption, education, and unemployment in the country ([Soeung \(2013\)](#) ). Since those messages can be addressed via site Facebook fast and could reach a large number of people over long distance, Sam Rainsy, the opposition leader claimed that he got more popularity on Facebook compare to Hun Sen’s ruling (CPP) one month before the last year election and this victory continue growing until now as he still has more audience comparing to the other parties including the 35-year-ruling CPP in the July 28 national election.



**Figure 6:** “A supporter, center, of the newly merged the CNRP, holds an iPad during an election campaign in Koh Kra-bey on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Wednesday, July 3, 2013. Cambodia's political parties on June 27, 2013 kicked off the official campaign period for the July 28 general election, which is virtually certain to see Prime Minister Hun Sen, Asia's longest-serving leader, extend his 28 years in power” ([Khoun 2014](#)). (AP Photo/Heng Sinith)

Regarding the update posts made by both big political parties (CCP & CNRP) and other political activists that interest young people to keep track on what have they been doing and what are their weakness and strength. No one can hide the truth forever and everything is gradually discovered by those posts on uncensored social networking. From considering of those parties ‘update on their Facebook page, the young users make use of, and improve, their conscience, analysis, social and political change. They, therefore, develop their use of social site Facebook more than just for entertainment. The critically thinking competence is enhanced when they could keep up to variety of news from sources and from searching engine provided by Facebook.

One of the groups interviewed, who is the famous blogger in Cambodia described her interest of using Facebook that she never watched Television but Facebook to keep update news information; especially, the trend of youth related to politics. She followed up messaged updated by the those pages including the ruling party, the opposition party, political actives and the independent pages to observed what happened in social political sphere. Furthermore, she said via social networking mean, young people are braver to express their opinion and even to condemn the political actors. One more important thing she also revealed that Facebook enables a social and political change in Cambodia with a large number of users that most of them are youth (18-24 year-old) who are more active in posting, updating, sharing news or photos, videos, raising issue related to injustice, politics and society. Together with their voice and the post updated by big opposition party CNRP via platform Facebook helped making the Cambodian government more open and look into the trend of this well-known site in the country. However, she continued “I can’t deny that Facebook helped to make behavior change, social and political change happened in Cambodia, but a better-change needs more than this tool which is the individuals. Individuals have to use it in an effective way with self responsibly by sharing good news for mutual benefit” (Facebook User 3). One user believed that the CNRP is more popular on Facebook than other parties and gain majority support during the election via its campaign on Facebook which attracted to young Cambodian whom then continue to transmitting their political trend

to their relatives and family. However, he added that users including political decision-makers, activists and individuals should use social media in a good way by not take this as an anarchy place to insult of offend each other but to exchange ideas or find solutions for a better society (Facebook User 13).

In connection with this, one of the participants said that the CNRP really could take an important advantage over other parties through this popular site Facebook.com. He continues that through his observation the opposition party has more supporters than other parties as it could connect and keep update people via Facebook and this kind of thing never exists before (Facebook user 24). Facebook really helped the CNRP to gain popularity because it could not do anything through television as all the televisions are controlled by the government. “Facebook of course inspires audiences...it helps the CNRP to gain popularity and Facebook of course helps the opposition party becomes famous and gain more support” (Facebook user 23). Since Facebook offers more widely news information compare to television and radio which tends only to broadcast all the good things about the government while people get to know more about what were hidden by the media owned by the government and its connection. This is the reason that made the opposition party gained more ballots from the people (Facebook user 26). “I have followed the CNRP’s page on Facebook so that I could keep update what the government has hidden so far including social injustice and other social problems.”

#### **6.4.3 Voter Choice and Election Result Effect via Facebook Campaign**

It is truly recognizable that political parties in the modern day turn their political communication to Facebook. A relationship between social media usage and decision making in the election is seen in general as participants interviewed are likely saying that people are likely to vote for the opposition party (CNRP) when social media were used, and they were more likely to vote for the ruling (Hun Sen) party when social media was not presented. It is a really strong “Social Media Effects” ([Hamilton 2011](#)) which assumed that there are more people who interactively involve in political process –peer-to-peer interaction. His study suggested that social media like Facebook has an effect on political beliefs and involvement in the political process which leads to an impact in the world of political campaigns and voter choice. With enough and variety of news through social media sources, participants get to think enough, searching, considering and analyzing ([Wattal 2010](#)). The Obama campaign’s uses of the social media platforms plays a large role in his election campaign to influence

voters. Similarly, according to Jeff Gulati, political science professor at Bentley College, “the real benefits of social networking sites will be the feeling in the future for those candidates who continue to engage their supporters after the election is over by promoting a genuine sense of community among them” ([Westling 2007](#)).

The use of Facebook by the Cambodian opposition Party did work. Without Facebook, the opposition leader would not have been the nominee. Regarding the point discussed above, one of participants in the study said Facebook did help CNRP a lot over the election result, for instance, individuals are able to keep up news update by Sam Rainsy, the opposition leader party that attracts supporter; especially, young people, and he did it because of those tools, because he was able to turn thousands of people to know government behavior and what was hidden before from the Cambodian citizens before” (Facebook User 17). By sharing her observation, another user revealed that now the majority of Cambodian youth are more understanding and sharing ideas related to politics on their Facebook profile. For example, they write comments and share videos among the interest group that made government took their criticism into account such as Cambodia’s National Election Committee (NEC) reform because it is generally known that NEC is part of by the 35-year-ruling CPP protocol. “Facebook is now a big social media in Cambodia, citizens are able to access more news such as human rights violations, land grabbing, electoral issues, protests, political gatherings, mass demonstrations and it leads to a change as a result of last national election.” (Facebook users 20)

“The opposition party (CNRP) can get more supporters via Facebook by sending message related to negative activities of the government...The CNRP did get a bit majority of ballots that also scare the ruling party and I would not believe that the opposition party could get that victory over the election without Facebook” (Facebook User 2).

The number of young Cambodian voters (18-20 years old) are approximately 3.5 million out of 9.5 million voters were registered during the last year election ([Cambodia’s National Election Committee \(2013\)](#)) . Among those young voters, they identify themselves with political groups and taking their political discussions online, and also take a step to participate in the real world by discussing or debating among the group about social and political trend in the country. In addition, Facebook user 1, the political blogger and the founder of politikoffee – a forum where a group of youth come together and discuss and exchange ideas on many issues but mainly about politics at varieties of café shops in the capital city of Cambodia Phnom Penh. The politikoffee forum was created first back in 2011

with the idea of few youth who are the specialists in political science and social economics. Up to now the forum has more than 200 active members plus 200 more youth who requested to be in the group— asserted on the benefits of the use of Facebook by Cambodian’s party leaders.

“The CNRP is called the Facebook party; it took the first lead in creating page on this social media mean which has growth the use rapidly in the country. CNRP created page not far before the election and since CNRP gains popularity though this means other parties also start to follow this strategy. CNRP has more supporters including (like, comment, share) than the ruling party.” More than this he added that “Since CNRP can use social network to communicate and keep in touch with supporter. With variety of news and sources through platform Facebook, people are more analysis and they will have their own belief in voting for political leader they intend to truth. This is change in Cambodian society through Facebook.”

Last but not least, Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites in the world. Regarding to political sector, Facebook has impacts over the political preferences and the beliefs of the voters. The study of Stefano DellaVigna and Ethan Kaplan: “The media play a key role in shaping these preferences and beliefs. They collect, summarize, and frame the information that voters use in their voting decisions. As a result, many have expressed concern that the media may be able to systematically manipulate political beliefs ([Kaplan](#)).” In addition to the study above, Ou Virak, cited by K. CARLSON’ article in 2014 said “The ruling party is certainly frustrated at the fact that they cannot win the battle online. They have no idea what to do. They tried different things. They tried throwing a lot of money, and that didn't work. So they're obviously frustrated ([CARLSON 2014](#)).”

After the results were analyzed, it is seen that the participants mainly use Facebook to get access to more information and keep themselves informed about the political situation in Cambodia because most of the old media are manipulated by the government. They also use this social network to inform, share, upload and comment information related to politics and election.

Another interesting point is that through social network, Facebook, the participants could get more variety of news along with many of sources. For this reason, they tend to know more about the politicians’ behavior. Most of the participants even mentioned the term mindset change due to the varieties of news and sources they get. They added that they are more likely to analyze and think more critically toward their decision during the election. Now there is no



clear proof that this lead to the changes of result in the election but the ones who were asked believed so.

## **7. Conclusion**

Cambodian political trend of positive change is the reflection of the impacts of social networking site, Facebook, in Cambodian society. FB is a big challenge to traditional media and it has become the number one social media site among other means in Cambodia. Cambodian citizen, especially youth, have chosen it as a choice of communication, keeping up with news and entertainment. In political process, the power of this popular site is providing an easy way for individuals to share information, get informed and even to express their opinions safely and freely with their peers. As a result, this study has unveiled the influences of Facebook on Cambodian's political environment and mindset change resulting in voting decision making. This can be explained mainly by the fact that Cambodian people can have much easier access to more information, self-expression, discussion and debating over social and political issues.

Before Facebook was popularly used for "Fun, Friendship and Socialization" for Cambodian users ( [Saray \(2010\)](#)). However, its usage now is more than those reasons. People have expanded their use to participate in politics; especially, during the last national election on July 28, 2013. Cambodian citizen; especially, young people became interested in social and political issues. They turned out to be more active and braver in sharing, raising their personal views and observing over news update such as campaign, protest, social conflicts, mass demonstration, land grabbing, and corruption activities.

First of all, this research study explored mainly the reasons that make this social networking platform gain its rapid popularity among Cambodian citizens, who then turned to use it for the political participation. Secondly, among many forms of political participation, Facebook has been becoming a preferred mean of youth to make political contribution both for external factor use and internal factor use. Thirdly, I studied the influence of social media usage on Cambodian politics. Social network provides free space for parties or politicians and citizens' direct and interactive communication with each other. For example, social media really has a very remarkable influence on the result of the 2008 U.S. presidential election and it is also the case in Cambodia during the last year Cambodia's general election on July 28, 2013.



In this dissertation paper, the research study found that Facebook has become a main part of online youth social networking user's everyday activities because all of the users used Facebook log in and use Facebook more than once a day. There are four crucial purposes of using this outstanding social site which includes (1) Seeking information (2) socializing (3) friendship maintaining, and (4) seeking entertainment and studying purpose. Facebook has a massive growth in the number of users up to now. The reason behind this, the study revealed that, it is because of weakness of traditional media in the country. Old media including newspaper, radio and television are affiliated with the government and those who allied with high ranking official of the Cambodian government. Citizen could not access to balance and only to exaggerate news or information featuring Cambodian People's Party (CPP) which has run the country since 1985.

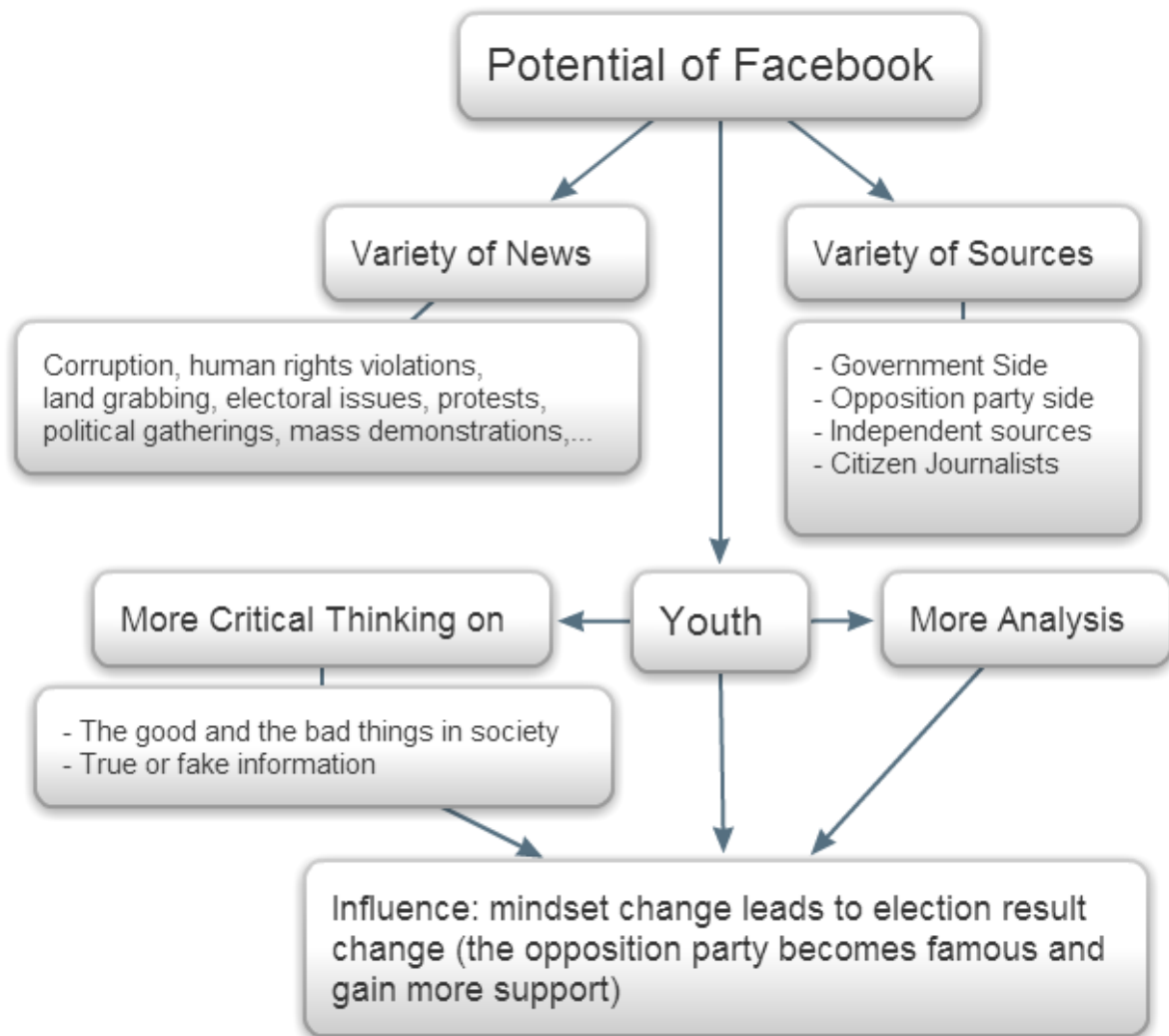
Moreover, the paper explored that young people integrated themselves in political participation in two ways. First, external or visible participation—air their voice by posting, sharing political news and making comments or clicking like on messages posted by political actors on the Facebook page. Second, indirect participation—only keep themselves updated and informed of information related to politics. I explored that Facebook is the most popular platform, which is not a state-controlled media which cover only one-sided views like local newspaper, radio and television. The number of Facebook users is huge compare to others because it is an enabler to make the public access the information faster and is user-friendly. More features such as “like, comment, frictionless share and subscribe” have provided the attraction the users who were interviewed in this paper.

Regarding social media impacts of Cambodian youth's engagement in Politic through social media, the study found out that social media does have influence on the Cambodian politics. The growing social site like Facebook has brought significant changes and opportunities for both individual and governments in term of new digital communication which brings both greater social participation and change in the country. On the one hand, Social networking platform is a two-way communication that enables individuals to get informed from many sources with more informative, interactive and immediate. On the other hand, they could also bring their voices and condemnation to discuss and debate among the users and also with political actors widely that is very different before the emergence of new media in the country. Since Cambodian citizens could access news more freely and from

many sides widely, they can consider and analysis things or the real issue over politics content wisely, that made a big change to the result of the national election in 2013.

Another important thing, the study showed that young people have shown more courage and are more active to raise their voice and discuss through social networking platform known as Facebook to the government. The Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) opposition leader Sam Rainsy has used Facebook to attract and get support from the young voters during the election campaign. He has more fans over the prime minister's Facebook page. Due to this big trend, prime minister Hun Sen turned to see the impact of social media that keep growing as well. Though the state-owned media is still an important source but it is only for the people in the province that are not widely access to internet yet so the prime minister's page on Facebook has become more active; especially, respond to the matters that the opposition leader attack to the government including corruption, human rights violations, land grabbing, electoral issues, protests, political gatherings, mass demonstrations. Since Cambodian citizen could keep up more news from many sources, they think more critically and then change their beliefs in choosing political party to run the country. However, the leak of cyber law draft brings a worry that this new media will be censored by the government so users can not use it freely and suavely like before. ([Peter \(2014\)](#)). This is also a threat to user for getting free and fair news from many sources. This new draft of internet law is seen as a potential tool for the government to take back its supporters, who has lost their beliefs to the position party CNRP. Political change via Cambodian youth participation through Facebook, which found out by this study, is in the concise of Figure 8 as below:

**Figure 7:** Political change via Cambodian youth participation through Facebook



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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

#### **In-depth-Interview Guide**

**This interview guide is based on the 3 principles questions below:**

1. Why do Cambodian youth use social media to engage themselves in politics and why is Facebook the most popular social media platforms they are more likely to use?
2. How do Cambodian youth use social media in political engagement?
3. What are the impacts of Cambodian youth's engagement in Politic through social media?

#### **I. Respondent Information**

1. Name, Age, Study Background, Profession/ Position, Social Status

#### **II. Facebook experiences and online behaviors**

##### **1. Facebook experiences**

- How long
- How did you know
- Why did you start
- What skills do you need (English, computer skill?)

##### **2. Online behaviors (where, why you log in, where the most frequently, how much each month?)**

-How often per week:

☐ >1/day, ☐ 1/day, ☐ almost every day, ☐ 1/w, ☐ <1/w, ☐ <1/w

-How long each time:

☐ <15mins, ☐ 15mins, ☐ 30mins, ☐ 1hrs, ☐ 1:30hrs, ☐ 2hrs, ☐ 3hrs, ☐ 4hrs, ☐ 5hrs,  
☐ > 5hrs?

#### **III. Motivations and Purposes**

1. Motivations (why you continue to use, why you expand for other purposes?)
2. Purposes (what purposes: study purpose, entertainment, socialization, politics involvement, everyday needs, no specific purpose, marketing commercial...?)
3. Facebook uses
  - How often do you use for each purpose per week?  
☐ >1/day, ☐ 1/day, ☐ almost every day, ☐ 1/w, ☐ <1/w, ☐ <1/w
  - For how long each time? Percentage

☐ <15mins, ☐ 15mins, ☐ 30mins, ☐ 1hrs, ☐ 1:30hrs, ☐ 2hrs, ☐ 3hrs, ☐ 4hrs,  
☐ 5hrs, ☐ > 5hrs?

-What online activities in each purpose? Name the top 3 in each purpose.

-How long for each activities?

☐ <15mins, ☐ 15mins, ☐ 30mins, ☐ 1hrs, ☐ 1:30hrs, ☐ 2hrs, ☐ 3hrs, ☐ 4hrs, ☐ 5hrs,  
☐ >5hrs?

#### **IV. Facebook Integration**

1. Life aspects' needs (what parts of your life that the Facebook integrated to?)
2. Importance (how important? will your everyday life stuck if there is no Facebook: why or why not?)
3. Feasibility (how easy it is to Facebook in comparison the other social media sites such as Twitter?)

#### **V. Perceptions**

##### **1. Perceptions on the Facebook**

-Uses: what are the benefits, what are the risks, can it response to most of the problems in different aspects of society: why or why not?

##### **2. Perceptions on the Facebook impacts**

-Political change: Is there any political changes since Facebook become popular platform? (Compare before and after) (Low, Average, Fair, High)

-Impacts: How Facebook's growing influence on Cambodian politics? What parts of political change in society?

-Society impacts: what do you think about those impacts? (Positive, negative, more positive, more negative, or equally)

#### **VI. Facebook in Political Use**

- Do you think that Facebook is a very good or important tool for political change in the country? Why or why not?

- Do you think your Facebook use to get involved in politics is now enough for political change? Why or why not?

- Have you ever followed or read the update on Facebook page of political actors?

- Do you think using the social media, Facebook, affected the outcome of the July's national election last year? Why or why not?

- Do you think politicians nominated voter by only online campaign via Facebook?

- Do you think without Facebook there would be a political change in the country?

**Appendix B**  
**Schedule / Timetable**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities</b>
September to October 2013	Proposing topic and discussing about the topic
September to November 2013	Conducting research on the topic and take all important notes
Late October 2013	Submission the first draft of the short proposal
Mid November 2013	Submission of the final draft of the short proposal
25 November 2013	Submission of the first draft of proposal
30 November 2013	Sampling target group
30 January 2014	Submission of the final draft of proposal
Mid February 2014	Submission of the first draft of interview guide
Mid-March 2014	Submission of the final draft of interview guide
March-July 2014	Doing field work, End of field work, and entering data
May-July 2014	Analysis Data and Writing up data
Late July 2014	Thesis paper is completed

**Appendix C**  
**Participants Information**

<b>Nº</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Study Background</b>	<b>Year of Using</b>
1	Political Blogger& Comm officer	27	M	B.A. in Political Science	2008
2	Lecture	27	M	M.A. in Cinema-tograpahy & Journalism Advertising	2008
3	Communication Specialist	25	F	B.A. in Media Management	2007
4	Student	23	M	B.A. in Media Management	2009
5	Interactive Team Manger	25	F	B.A in Teaching English as A Foreign Language	2009
6	Student	24	F	Dental Student	2011
7	Student	20	F	B.A. in Economic Development	2009
8	Program Supporter	22	F	B.A. in International Relationship	2008
9	Student	30	M	PHD. in Marketing	2007
10	Purchasing	29	M	B.A. in Finance and Banking	2010
11	Research Assistant	25	F	B.A. in Communication	2009
12	Student	24	F	M.A. in Korean Study	2012
13	Civil Engineering	26	M	M.A. in Civil Engineering	2010
14	Lecturer of Civil law & Labor Law	27	M	M.A. in Insurance Law	2009
15	Communication Officer	24	F	B.A. in Media Management	2010
16	Reporter	25	M	B.A. in English Literature	2010
17	Reporter	26	F	B.A. in Media Management	2008
18	Reporter	25	M	B.A. in Media Management	2008
19	Freelancer	20	F	B.A. in Media Management	2011
20	Student	24	F	B.A. in Public Relation	2009
21	Teacher & PR Coordinator	25	M	B.A. in Media Management	2007

22	Operation Manager	24	M	B.A. in Tourism	2009
23	Executive Assistance	28	F	B.A. of IR	2010
24	Student	26	M	M.A. in Sustainability Building and Management	2009
25	Reintegration officer	24	F	B.A. in Psychology	2010
26	Student	21	F	B.A. in English Literature	2010